

# Meta Definitions For Nouns

Defining Nouns with a Metalinguistic Focus

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## Definition Formats for Nouns

Use this grammatical structure when defining singular nouns:  
**Article + Target Word + Copula Verb + Article + Category + Relative Clause/Clauses with Additional Semantic Information.**

Here is the quick formula: "An X is a Y that Z."

Examples:

"A dog is an animal that barks and has fur.

"A veterinarian is a kind of doctor who takes care of animals."

Use this grammatical structure when defining plural nouns:  
**Target Word + Copular Verb + Category + Relative Clause/Clauses with Additional Semantic Information.**

Here is the quick formula: "X are Y that Z."

Examples:

"Earrings are pieces of jewelry that you wear in your ears."

"Cars are vehicles that you can drive and have engines."

## Quick Rules for Meta Definitions

- Use the following templates to model and teach definitions of nouns. You can use them as printable worksheets or laminate them for repeated use.
- This format can be used for many different nouns, from common objects to complex curricular vocabulary.
- Use of articles (e.g., a, an, the) and relative pronouns (e.g., which, who, that) may vary depending on context.
- Category may be a phrase (e.g., "a kind/type of animal") or individual word (e.g., "animal").
- Use these subtle variations in syntactic structure to as learning opportunities teach flexible language use.
- Other more detailed variations to this definition format exist.
- This format is not typically used for defining adjectives and verbs.
- Encourage students to add multiple clauses with additional semantic information (e.g., "An apple is a fruit that can be green, red, or yellow, grows on a tree, has seeds and skin, and can be used to make juice or pie.").

A \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_  
(target word) (category)

that \_\_\_\_\_  
(additional details such as function, appearance, composition, associations)

\_\_\_\_\_•

A \_\_\_\_\_ is a \_\_\_\_\_  
(target word) (category)

who \_\_\_\_\_  
(additional details such as function, appearance, composition, associations)

are

(target word)

(category)

that

(additional details such as function, appearance, composition, associations)

are

(target word)

(category)

who

(additional details such as function, appearance, composition, associations)